



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 10**

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OFFICE OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW  
AND ASSESSMENT

August 1, 2016

M. Earle Stewart, Tongass National Forest  
Attn: Forest Plan Amendment  
648 Mission Street  
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Dear Mr. Stewart:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Record of Decision for the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan Amendment, Tongass National Forest, in southeast Alaska. We have reviewed the Draft EIS in accordance with our responsibilities under Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. (EPA Project Number: 14-0026-AFS).

In our comments on the Draft EIS, we assigned a rating of EC-2 (Environmental Concerns-Insufficient Information). While we supported the selection of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5), we raised concerns regarding the potential impacts to local communities and various forest resources that the preferred alternative and other alternatives would incur during the transition from old growth to young growth harvest. We also requested additional information regarding climate change analysis and impacts.

We are pleased that the Forest Service has identified Alternative 5, with modifications, as its Selected Alternative in the Draft ROD. We agree with the Forest Service that this alternative will accelerate the transition to young growth harvest, while sustaining and allowing diversification of local economies. Alternative 5 also increases flexibility for the review and authorization of renewable energy projects.

We believe, overall, the Final EIS adequately responds to our comments to the Draft EIS. We appreciate the addition of Chapter 5, which describes plan direction pertaining to the entire forest and specific land use designations, as well as the newly developed "Young Growth, Renewable Energy and Transportation Systems Corridors LUD." We also note the inclusion of additional information to clearly identify the areas suitable and not suitable for timber harvest, in accordance with the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule. We appreciate the additional discussion regarding the sequestration and storage capability of old growth forest. Finally, we recognize that a "Summary Booklet" was provided in the Final EIS in response to our request for an Executive Summary.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Final EIS and Draft Record of Decision for the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan Amendment. Please contact Jennifer Curtis of my staff in Anchorage at 907-271-6324 or [curtis.jennifer@epa.gov](mailto:curtis.jennifer@epa.gov) with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine B. Littleton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "C" and "L".

Christine B. Littleton, Manager  
Office of Environmental Review and Assessment